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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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Director of Congressional Affairs

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NOTE FOR: The Director

VIA: The Deputy Director

FROM: Dave Gries

In case you missed this.

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Letters to the Editor

Congressional Leaks Erode Security

As a member of the House Intelligence Committee, I must take strong exception to Sen. Durenberger's critique (Letters, May 12) of Suzanne Garment's April 18 Capital Chronicle regarding Congress's oversight of intelligence. My Senatorial colleague fails to refute Ms. Garment's basic contention that too many Members and staff are "in the intelligence loop" and "when it comes to secrets, the U.S. Congress is a sieve."

To imply, as the Senator does, that the current arrangement is leakproof is at variance with the facts. I am aware of Congressional leaks that have damaged U.S. intelligence interests in Asia, the Middle East and Central America. Overriding security concerns preclude me from elaborating.

No less a journalistic authority on leaks than Daniel Schorr noted in a Washington Post article (Nov. 14, 1985) ". . . that it has never been suggested that a Member of Congress could be disciplined other than by Congress itself. This is relevant because (I don't think that I am baring any great journalistic secrets) the exposure of covert intelligence questions is frequently a form of Congressional whistleblowing. A leak often occurs when a clandestine plan runs into substantial opposition during a briefing for Congressional committees." Mr. Schorr cited a number of specific examples involving Congressional leaks of information on Angola, Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Libya.

Missing from the Senator's discussion of background investigations for Intelligence Committee staff is the fact that no Member of Congress is subjected to a commensurate security check. Such a loophole is an egregious security vulnerability that warrants immediate remedial action.

Sen. Durenberger also indicates that creating a Joint Committee on Intelligence as a remedy for the leak problem would essentially eliminate Congressional oversight of intelligence. That observation suggests that he believes that the oversight and analytical capabilities of Senators and Congressmen sitting together around a Joint Committee table would somehow be dramatically diminished or even muted. I don't follow this logic. I view a Joint Committee arrangement as analogous to an open-ended conference committee. Anyone who has observed a Conference Committee in action knows that the often intense "competitive analysis" of the issues that goes on between Senate and House conferees is one of the most salient features of these gatherings.

The thrust of Ms. Garment's article is right on target, and I am pleased to report that my Joint Committee proposal now has 150 cosponsors in the House.

HENRY J. HYDE (R., Ill.)
House of Representatives
Washington

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